respective positions on the issue. It was agreed to continue discussions on the issue during the next round of the dialogue process.

Criteria for recruitment of jawans in Military

328. SHRI BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDAR: SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that criteria for enrolment of jawans in Military has changed after 1970; and

(b) if so, the criteria which has been adopted and the reasons for the same?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Certain changes have taken place in the criteria for enrolment of slodiers into the Army since 1970 due to changing socio-economic conditions in the country and induction of sophisticated modern weapons/equipments in the Army.

Brief details of changes in criteria for enrolment of Soldiers (GD) in the Army are given as under:—

(i) Educational Standards:— The educational standard was enhanced to 10th class pass w.e.f. 1st April, 1986 due to progressive modernisation in the Army and need for effective handling of sophisticated weapons/equipment system of the future. However, dispensation in educational standards have been accorded to certain areas/communities due to socio-economic and educational status prevalent in these regions.

(ii) Age:— The minimum age criteria for enrolment into the Army was lowered from 17 to 16 years w.e.f. 13th March, 1984 to give enhanced opportunity of recruitment to potential candidates.

(iii) Physical Standards:— The minimum Physical standards have been reviewed from time to time based on various studies and a statistical evaluation of the physical standards carried out by Defence Institute of Physiology & Allied Science as follows:—

(a) 1971:— Minimum physical standards for specified classed were laid down.

(b) 1978:— The physical standards based on caste/class were further enhanced.

(c) 1983:— The concept of caste/ class based on minimum physical standards was changed and region based physical standards were adopted.

(d) 1995:— The region-based physical standards were further enhanced particularly in height.

Induction of Light Combat Aircraft in IAF

329. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) would be ready for its first flight by mid-1999, as reported in the Hindustan Times, dated 12th October, 1998;

(b) if so, by when Government hope to induct Light Combat Aircraft into the Indian Air Force; and

(c) the present assessment of the U.S. Company in this regard who are collaborating with India's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) on the L.C.A.'s digital flight control system and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The first LCA technology demonstrator (TD-1) will be ready for its first flight by mid-1999.

(b) The induction of LCA into the Indian Air Force is targeted for the year 2003.

(c) Consequent to the imposition of sanctions by the USA in May 1998, the licence given to Lockheed Martin Control System for transacting business with ADE was revoked by the US Government. A national team has been constituted to combat the impact of US sanctions.

IAS grip on policy on Navy

330. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Asian Age, dated 9th November, 1998 captioned "Break IAS grip on policy on Navy";

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to strengthen Navy to meet Pak's aggressiveness?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main issue raised in the news-item is about preparation of Strategic Defence Review that appears to have been made by Indian Navy in which comments on the functioning of the Indian bureaucracy are contained.

(c) Appropriate measures are taken on continual basis to maintain defence preparedness. Indian Navy is adequately equipped and modernised in keeping with the emerging threat perception.

Manufacture of spare parts for Indian Air Force

331. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Air Force is trying to develop indigenous private industry to manufacture spare parts for its fighter and transport planes and helicopters, etc., as reported in the Indian Express of 17th October, 1998;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Indian industry; and

(c) whether these spare parts are not being supplied by the original manufacturers of these war machines?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The response of the Indian industry has been found to be very encouraging as witnessed during the last three Exposition-cum-seminars held at Nasik, Bangalore and Chandigarh.

(c) The necessity has been felt for some time in view of the present geopolitical scenario wherein availability of required hardware/spares from the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) is not always guaranteed. The ever-increasing cost of imported spares and the long lead time, underlines the need to develop the indigenous private industry to contribute their might in this sector.

Grounded combat planes of the IAF

332. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of IAF combat planes have been grounded;

(b) if so, the total number of IAF combat planes grounded, so far;

(c) the period for which these fighter planes have been grounded and the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to make the grounded combat planes operational?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No Sir. The serviceability of IAF fleet and the equipment, is of a high standard.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.